

Altamont High School P.O. Box 130 Altamont, Utah 84001

March 29, 2006





Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

Altamont High School P.O. Box 130 Altamont, Utah 84001

March 29, 2006

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	ii
Utah State Board of Education	iii
Duchesne County School District Board of Education and District Administration	1
Altamont High School Administration and Staff	2
Altamont High School Mission Statement and Belief Statements	3
Members of the Visiting Team	4
Visiting Team Report	5
Chapter 1: School Profile	5
Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry	6
Chapter 2: The Self-Study Process	6
Chapter 3: Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness	7
Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals	7
Curriculum Development	7
Quality Instructional Design	8
Quality Assessment Systems	9
Leadership for School Improvement.	9
Community Building	10
Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning	11
Chapter 4: Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS) Standards I-XI	11
Chapter 5: School Improvement Efforts – Action Plan	13
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team	14

FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 29, 2006, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Altamont High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Mary Ellen Kettle is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Altamont High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Altamont High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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ALTAMONT HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Mary Ellen Kettle	Principal		
Brent Brotherson			
Counseling			
Brent Brotherson	Counselor		

Support Staff

Dave Price Counselor

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ALTAMONT HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Altamont High School is to prepare each student to contribute successfully to a diverse, ever changing society.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- 1. We believe critical thinking skills for students are the highest priority.
- 2. We believe all students, teachers, and staff can learn.
- 3. We believe positive values, standards, and ethics will be taught.
- 4. We believe the school community can make a positive difference in the lives of students.
- 5. We believe a variety of teaching techniques should be implemented to address diverse learning styles.
- 6. We believe all individuals should be treated with dignity and respect.
- 7. We believe in providing students with skills for lifelong learning.
- 8. We believe the responsibility for student education is shared among parents, teachers, students, and community.
- 9. We believe a safe learning environment is vital to the school community.
- 10. We believe in site-based decision-making.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Robert Stearmer, Uintah High School, Uintah School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Marsha Forsgren, Uintah High School, Uintah School District

Mary Moulton, Uintah High School, Uintah School District

Lynn Raymond, Orion Junior High School, Weber County School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

ALTAMONT HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Altamont High School is a small, rural high school (grades 7-12) with an enrollment of approximately 242 students. AHS students come from several small communities in the area including Altamont, Altonah, Bluebell, Mt. Emmons, Mountain Home, Talmage, and Upalco. AHS is one of four high schools served by the Duchesne County School District.

The school operates on a modified five-day schedule. Classes are held from 8:20 a.m. to 3:11 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and from 8:20 a.m. to 12:49 p.m. on Friday. Seven classes are held each day, and teachers are available after hours as needed to give individual help. There are 180 days in the school year, and the schedule exceeds the state requirement of 990 hours of instruction.

Students have access to college classes through a fiber-optic network, which operates in conjunction with the local campus of Utah State University. This program helps prepare students for entry into college and provides credit hours at reduced expense for families.

Altamont High School has a functioning Booster Club that provides extra support for all extracurricular activities. A Community Council made up of parents and staff members has been functioning for the past two years. The Community Council oversees the expenditure of some funds and provides a vital link to the community. The school is striving to work with the council to respond to parent concerns while improving the level of education for students.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

Altamont High School made an effort to collect and analyze student achievement data currently available to the school. Data that was collected for the school's profile is now disaggregated. As a result, meaningful analysis of the data has helped Altamont High School focus on more than general trends. Continued disaggregation of student data in the future will improve the staff's ability to identify specific groups of students who are not making reasonable progress.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

Altamont High School is strongly encouraged to continue its efforts to systematically collect and analyze student data to guide the decisions of the

school. It is suggested the administrative staff, Counseling Department, and other staff members continue to collaborate with the district in designing an effective data-collection and management system that can be used by the various stakeholders within the community.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

The Visiting Team recommends that Altamont High School continue to:

- Study patterns of performance based on gender and grade level.
- Look for correlations between student achievement and other measures of student success, such as attendance, course grades, and participation in school activities.
- Look for correlations between class grades and scores on standardized achievement tests

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?
 - The school conducted an NSSE survey to assess the extent of implementation and effectiveness of the school improvement plan at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year, and conducted similar surveys during the 2004-2005 school year. There is evidence that the school has taken a serious look at the disaggregated data and has implemented various plans to meet the needs of the students.
- b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?
 - The needs assessments conducted at the beginning of the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years reflected both strengths and limitations of Altamont High School. The school should continue to collect and analyze data and continue to encourage involvement of stakeholders (i.e., parents, teachers, students, and administrators).

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Altamont High School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

- 1. Effective Communication
- 2. Critical Thinking Skills
- 3. Employable Skills
- 4. Responsible Citizenship

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?
 - The establishment of the mission statement for Altamont Junior High School and Altamont High School resulted from meetings of the school Community Council, department heads, the accreditation committee, students, parents outside the school Community Council, and faculty members. The mission statements was condensed and refined to reflect a succinct mission for the school.
- b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?
 - The school's belief statements address the key issues pertinent to decision-making and policy development.
- c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?
 - School-wide DRSLs are in place and align well with the school mission statement.

Curriculum Development:

- a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?
 - The majority of teaching staff members at Altamont High School are familiar with the Utah Core Curriculum. Some collaboration within departments with regard to the Core has taken place. The Visiting Team encourages Altamont High

School to explore additional collaboration within departments, and across departments. Now that the focus groups have been formed and the DRSLs established, the staff will have a more complete picture of curriculum alignment.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

The DRSLs now can be utilized to support the development of a focused curriculum that will address the school's mission statement. The Visiting Team recommends that Altamont High School use professional development time to train all teachers to implement the DRSLs in individual classrooms.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

The great extent of the design and implementation of a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students was evident in the classroom. The Visiting Team observed a positive academic learning climate. Also noted was the emphasis placed on students' achievement of essential knowledge and skills, as well as an emphasis on higher-order thinking skills that require students to apply their learning in a meaningful context. It was clear from the Visiting Team's observations that the time students spend engaged in academics is maximized, and that instructional time is protected to a great degree.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

One example of the use of such strategies is the evidence of collaboration between the Special Education Department and the other departments. Attention is being given to working directly with the Special Education Department in identifying student needs and best practices to help them achieve in the regular classroom.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

There is evidence that students are provided with a variety of opportunities to receive additional assistance to improve learning. One example is the use of monies to fund after-school and weekend tutoring times during which all teachers provide additional assistance. The Visiting Team commends the faculty for its willingness to listen to students read during their prep time.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?
 - There is clear evidence of effort to clearly define the type of achievement to be assessed, and the performance standards for evaluating the quality of students' achievement prior to developing assessments of student learning.
- b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?
 - Clearly defined expectations for student achievement and performance standards have been developed. Dialogue on testing is generally focused on CRT and SAT results. The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to focus on state test scores to determine the learning needs of the students. Other types of schoolwide, departmental, and class assessments should continue to be developed and implemented that reflect the intended purposes and more clearly define student needs and achievement.
- c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?
 - Grading practices are fair. Criteria for judging student performance are established and shared with students in advance of the assessment, and are applied on an equitable basis.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?
 - The leadership of Altamont High School has established an academic learning climate in which teaching and learning are supported. Students feel valued and important.
- b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?
 - The leadership at Altamont High School has taken steps to make sure decisions are based on validated, research-based practices. However, the decision-making process should continue to consistently take into account the school's beliefs and mission. The leadership of Altamont High School should continue to seek involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making process.

- c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?
 - The leadership at Altamont High School is using a variety of methods to monitor student achievement and instructional effectiveness. The school's leadership continues to also monitor student progress through the use of CRTs and SATs.
- d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?
 - The leadership of the school has made an effort to assure that most of the policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school's beliefs and mission, and are designed to maximize opportunities for successful learning.
- e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?
 - Decisions related to the allocation and use of resources take into account the school's goals. Now that DRSLs have been developed, the leadership, including all stakeholders, will be able to make better decisions when allocating resources.
- f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?
 - The school leadership has made an effort to empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning.

Community Building:

- *a)* To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?
 - Positive and productive working relationships are established among most of the students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. Collaborative and interdependent teams are established on a periodic basis to achieve some of the school's goals.
- b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

The school reaches out to most parents and families to help engage them as partners in the learning process. Evidence of a strong and active Community Council was noted, along with many activities designed to bring parents and other community members into the school-community network.

<u>Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:</u>

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?

The school's organizational system and culture provide support for school improvement initiatives and professional development. Teachers are given a budget for professional development to use at their discretion, with principal approval. The school needs to implement plans for school-wide professional development, based on the DRSLs, that is focused on the school's goals for improvement

b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

The school should continue to foster an understanding of the change process among those who have a stake in the work of the school.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Standard I – Educational Program

This standard is met. Altamont High's instructional and organizational practices, as well as its policies and procedures, support the desired results for student learning and prepare students to succeed in a culturally diverse, democratic society.

Standard II - Student Personnel Services

This standard is met. Student personnel services are designed to give systematic assistance to students. The assigned personnel for guidance includes a minimum of one full-time person for each 400 students enrolled.

Standard III – School Plant and Equipment

This standard is met. The school plant provides for a variety of instructional activities and programs and incorporates aesthetic features that contribute to a positive educational atmosphere.

Standard IV – Library Media Program

This standard is met. The school library media program is a primary resource for literacy, information, and curriculum support. A certified library media teacher provides instruction, resources, and activities to promote independent use of ideas and information

Standard V - Records

This standard is met. Student records are maintained, handled, and protected in the best interests of students and parents. Students and parents have the right to access personal student records and are ensured the privacy of such, as guaranteed by federal legislation.

Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)

This standard is met. The school improvement plan focuses on the total school rather than each of the separate components within the school.

Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel

This standard is met. All professional personnel are in compliance with the licensing requirements of the state of Utah and are properly endorsed for the subjects they are assigned.

Standard VIII - Administration

This standard is met. The administration of Altamont High provides educational leadership, supervises and coordinates programs, and carries out the necessary administrative procedures.

Standard IX - Teacher Load

This standard is met. The total number of students instructed by any one teacher in any one grading period does not exceed numbers set by the Utah State Office of Education and/or Northwest.

Standard X – Activities

This standard is met. Altamont High School supports a range of activities that supplement the basic instructional program by providing additional experiences and opportunities for learning to take place.

Standard XI – Business Practices

This standard is met. The school is financially responsible. Proper budgetary procedures and generally accepted accounting principles are followed for all school funds. The school's advertising and promotional literature are completely truthful and ethical.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?

The plan does reflect a long-term commitment, with both long- and short-term goals to address the needs of the school community based upon ongoing data. However, the Visiting Team recommends that time be spent in developing assessment tools to measure desired outcomes.

b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?

There appears to be a desire for commitment to a system-wide school action plan. Altamont High School should remain committed to its action plan and the implementation of DRSLs across all departments.

c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?

While there are school-wide and departmental DRSLs, the follow-up process should include a defined assessment that is focused on common school-wide learning outcomes.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Altamont High School for its work to increase school spirit and pride.
- The Visiting Team commends Altamont High School for the implementation of programs such as the Reading Club, peer tutoring, and study skills classes that provide daily/weekly aid for students to succeed.
- The Visiting Team commends Altamont High School for recognizing and utilizing the data to drive writing across the curriculum and using available resources to train faculty.
- The Visiting Team commends Altamont High School for its high expectations and high standards.
- The Visiting Team commends Altamont High School for creating an environment where students feel safe, accepted, and involved.
- The Visiting Team commends Altamont High School for the involvement of all stakeholders—parents, teachers, and students. All feel a sense of collaboration and commitment to student success.
- The Visiting Team commends Altamont High School faculty for providing a well-rounded education in a rural setting.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that Altamont High School continue to involve all stakeholders in the process of decision making for school improvement on a monthly basis.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Altamont High School continue conversations with all stakeholders to meet students' needs and encourage greater student achievement.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Altamont High School continue conversations and communication with all stakeholders concerning available resources and developing programs for those students who are struggling or who are not learning.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Altamont High School continue to communicate with all stakeholders concerning available resources for students who have difficulty learning.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Altamont High School continue training and implementation for writing across the curriculum and create a school-wide assessment rubric for immediate implementation.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Altamont High School continue to involve all stakeholders, including students, in the focus group process.